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By ___, NARA, Date 5-18-92

NODIS/HARVAN/DOUBLE PLUS

FOR HARRIMAN AND VANCE

REF: SAIGON 41323

SUBJECT: JOINT MEETING OCTOBER 28.

1. THE MEETING WITH THIEU, KY AND THANH TOOK PLACE IN THE LATE AFTERNOON, AND THE FACT THAT MORE THAN HALF THE TIME WAS TAKEN UP BY EXCHANGES BETWEEN THE VIETNAMESE (MOSTLY BETWEEN KY AND THIEU) SHOWED HOW NECESSARY IT HAD BEEN. I CAN REPORT THAT AT THE END OF THE MEETING (ATTENDED ON OUR SIDE ALSO BY BERGER AND HERZ) WE REACHED AGREEMENT ON A SOMEWHAT CHANGED JOINT ANNOUNCEMENT, BUT ONE WHICH I BELIEVE WE CAN ACCEPT AND WHICH THE GVN BELIEVES WILL MAKE IT EASIER FOR THEM TO COPE WITH CRITICISM THAT THEY HAD AGREED TO MEET WITH THE NLF. IT WAS NOT EASY.

2. CHANGES REPRESENTED BY THE REDRAFT OF THE JOINT ANNOUNCEMENT (SEPTEL) ARE AS FOLLOWS:

A. SECOND AND THIRD PARAGRAPHS ARE SWITCHED. IT IS NOT CLEAR TO ME WHY THE GVN PREFERS IT THAT WAY, BUT SINCE NO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE WHATEVER IS INVOLVED, AND SINCE WE HAD TO OPPOSE MORE IMPORTANT CHANGES THAT THIEU AND KY TRIED TO MAKE, I ACCEPTED THIS WITHOUT ARGUMENT AND RECOMMENDED THAT IT BE CONFIRMED.

B. THE LAST PARAGRAPH TO BE REWORDED (1) TO GET AWAY FROM THE IDEA OF "THE NEXT MEETING", WHICH CARRIED THE IMPLICATION TO THE GVN THAT THEY WERE BEING INCLUDED IN SOMETHING THAT HAD BEEN GOING ON FOR SOME TIME, RATHER THAN BEING THERE AT THE BEGINNING OF THE SUBSTANTIVE TALKS WITH NORTH VIET-NAM; (W2) USE OF THE WORD "DELEGATIONS" TO DESCRIBE GVN AND US ATTENDANCE,

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BY WHICH THEY HOPE TO CONFER MORE STATUS ON THE GVN REPRESENTATIVES; (3) DELETION OF THE SENTENCE BEGINNING "THE OTHER SIDE", WHICH THE GVN NOW CONSIDERS UNNECESSARY; AND (4) AMENDMENT OF THE LAST SENTENCE TO MAKE IT READ: "THE TWO PRESIDENTS WISH TO MAKE IT CLEAR THAT NEITHER THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM NOR THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT RECOGNIZES THE SO-CALLED NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT AS AN ENTITY INDEPENDENT OF NORTH VIETNAM."

3. KY, WHO APPARENTLY MADE THE GREATEST DIFFICULTIES DURING THE DISCUSSIONS, CAME UP TO ME AFTER THE MEETING AND SAID HE HAD WORKED HARD TO FIND A COMPROMISE. PERHAPS HE DO SO IN THE END SINCE AFTER NUMEROUS ATTEMPTS TO PRESENT THE FUTURE MEETINGS AS INVOLVING ONLY THREE DELEGATIONS, WHICH I REJECTED, KY FINALLY SAID, "I THINK IT IS BETTER THAT WE OPENLY RECOGNIZE THAT THE NLF WILL BE THERE.". IT WAS KY, APPARENTLY, WHO OFFERD TO DROP AS UNNECESSARY, THE PHRASE ABOUT THE OTHER SIDE BEING CONSTITUTED BY HANOI AS THEY WISH IT TO BE CONSTITUTED". HE SAID, "THE REALITY IS THAT WE ACCEPT THE FRONT AT THE CONFERENCE." THE MOST IMPORTANT THING FROM THE GVN POINT OF VIEW, AS THIEU EMPHASIZED, IS TO MAKE THE LAST SENTENCE OF THE JOINT ANNOUNCEMENT (ABOUT NON-RECOGNITION OF THE NLF) AS STRONG AS POSSIBLE.

4. SINCE THE GVN IN THE END GAVE UP THEIR ATTEMPTS TO PICTURE THE MEETINGS AS CONSISTING OF ONLY THREEE PARTICIPANTS, I JUST WISH TO RECORD THAT DISCUSSION WAS
LONG AND DIFFICULT. AT ONE POINT THIEU ASKED ME IF I HAD RECEIVED BINDING INSTRUCTIONS FROM MY GOVERNMENT THAT THE CONFERENCE MUST NOT BE PICTURED AS TAKING PLACE BETWEEN THREE DELEGATIONS. I ANSWERED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. EARLIER IN THE DISCUSSION I POINTED OUT ONCE MORE THAT SINCE HANOI WISHED THE MEETINGS TO BE FOUR-POWER, AND SAIGON WISHES THEM TO BE THREE-POWER, THE ONLY POSSIBLE BASIS FOR TALKS WAS TO BE SILENT ON THE POINT. KY UNDERSTOOD THIS WELL, EVEN WHILE TRYING TO SQUEEZE US. HE SAID: "I UNDERSTAND YOUR PROBLEM. YOU CAN'T HAVE A CONFERENCE IF HANOI WON'T COME -- OR IF SAIGON WON'T COME." BUT HE KEPT TRYING, NEVERTHELESS, TO FIND SOME FORUMLATION THAT WOULD HAVE MADE IT APPEAR THAT THERE WAS ONLY ONE DELEGATION ON THE OTHER SIDE.

5. AFTER AGREEMENT WAS REACHED ON THE TEXT (SEPTEL), KY SAID, "QUITE FRANKLY, WE ARE NOT SATISFIED, BUT WITH SUCH MATERIAL WE CAN EXPLAIN, ONLY IT WILL BE DIFFICULT TO CONVINCE THE PEOPLE. IF THE CONFERENCE LASTS MANY MONTHS, OUR PROBLEM WILL BE TO PREVENT A DISINTEGRATION OF MORALE ON OUR SIDE.". I REPEATED, WITH SOME EMPHASIS, THAT THIS IS ENTIRELY THE WRONG WAY OF LOOKING AT THE MEETING WITH THE NORTH VIETNAMESE IF IT EVENTUATES: THE GVN SHOULD PRESENT IT AS A VICTORY, IT WILL HAVE FORCED THE DRV TO NEGOTIATE WITH THEM, THE TALKS WILL BE A SIGN THAT THE DRV DESPAIRS OF OBTAINING ITS GOALS ON THE BATTLEFIELD, THAT IT RECOGNIZES THAT IT CANNOT SUBVERT OR INTIMIDATE THE SOUTH

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VIETNAMESE. BESIDES, WE WILL BE AT THE SIDE OF THE GVN BOTH AT THE TALKS AND IN PUSHING OUR MILITARY ADVANTAGES IN SOUTH VIETNAM, SO THAT THE DANGER OF DISINTEGRATION SHOULD BE ENTIRELY ON THE OTHER SIDE.

6. THERE WAS STILL MUCH APPREHENSION ON THE GVN SIDE ABOUT BEING FACED WITH ACCOMPLISHED FACTS AT THE FIRST MEETING: THEY WANTED TO KNOW HOW WE COULD AVOID PRESS PHOTOGRAPHERS AT ALL MEETINGS INCLUDING THE FIRST. THEY STRESSED THAT PICTURES SHOWING THE GVN SITTING ACROSS FROM THE NLF AS IF THE LATTER WERE A CO-EQUAL DELEGATION, WOULD BE EXTREMELY TROUBLESOME HERE. THANH ALSO SAID HE WISHED TO GO OVER THE POINTS COVERED IN ALL OUR RECENT DICUSSIONS TO DRAFT AGREED UNDERSTANDINGS, SO THAT WE WOULD HAVE A RECORD OF WHAT HAD BEEN DECIDED WITH RESPECT BOTH TO SUBSTANCE AND PROCEDURE. AT THE END IT WAS THANH HIMSELF WHO USED THE WORD "AGREEMENT" TO DESCRIBE THE OUTCOME OF TODAY'S JOINT MEETING.

7. I URGE APPROVAL OF THIS AGREEMENT WHICH IT SEEMS TOME MEETS OUR REQUIREMENTS WHILE GIVING THE VIETNAMESE SOMETHING THEY CAN LIVE WITH. IT HAS NOT BEEN AN EASY DECISION FOR THEM.

8. WE AGREED TO MEET SOON AGAIN TO DISCUSS SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES THAT MAY COME UP EARLY IF THERE ARE SERIOUS TALKS. BUNKER

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